STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
WEB SITE STANDARDS

State of NH Web Site Standards

REVISION LOG

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05/04/2004 OITSNHWS	Theresa Pare Curtis	Ver 1.0 created
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NH Department of Information Technology – Web Support Division
Effective - 12.01.2005

<u>**State of NH Web Site Standards**</u>

1   PURPOSE

To establish a common and uniform standards for all State of New Hampshire agencies regarding Web site branding, accessibility, and functionality.

1.1   Components

1.1.1   Branding

Branding encompasses the establishment of site architecture, navigation, layout, graphics, colors and fonts, minimum page elements, and consistent terminology, usage, and grammar. Branding is pivotal to the State's goal of providing a consistent look and feel to the State's Web presence.

1.1.2   Accessibility

Accessibility includes the assurance that electronic and information technology is accessible to people with disabilities. Accessibility challenges affect layout and design, navigation, graphics and sound, use of software other than HTML, use of multimedia elements, file size, as well as usage conventions. This addresses the need to make all state Web pages accessible to three groups:

- Users with disabilities (including visual, mobility, and cognitive/language impairments)
- Users using various technologies (for example, browsers, search engines, operating systems, wireless systems)
- Users accessing state pages from other countries

1.1.3   Functionality

Issues include content organization and presentation, adoption of common software, Web publishing tools, plug-ins, addressing schema, and file-naming conventions.

2   STANDARDS

All State Web sites will comply with the following standards:

State Statute	508 Standards	Merchant Services	Indexing Standards
Elements required by statute	**Accessibility standards**	**Electronic payment process**	**Metadata elements and subject thesaurus**
Information includes, but not limited to: - Name - Mission - Address - Telephone number - Contact person	Accessibility Policy includes: - Images - Text only alternative - Multimedia - Scripting - Color - Plug-ins - Style sheets - Forms - Image maps - Skip navigation - Tables - Time responses - Frames - Flicker rate	Three models available: - Orbital Gateway - Virtual Terminal - RiTA Server	Indexing requirements (draft) - Dublin Core element set - New Hampshire Subject Tree - Local keywords

<u>State of NH Web Site Standards</u>

2.1   State Statute

State law (1997, 2002:5) requires every State Department, Agency, Institution, Commission, and Board have a presence on the World Wide Web that is accessible from the State's portal.

2.2   508 Standards

The State has adopted compliance with 508 Accessibility Standards for all Web sites. Provisions in the standard require all agency Web sites to meet these standards or have a plan in place to accomplish compliance. The Department of Information Technology (DoIT), Web Services Division (WSD) performs monthly monitoring of State Web sites. For additional information, reference the *Web Site Accessibility Policy* and the *Web Site Accessibility Standards*.

2.3   Merchant Services

State agencies can collect and process payments electronically by this process. This includes both credit cards and ACH transactions. Additional information is available at
http://www.nh.gov/technology/its_merchant.html

2.4   Indexing Standards

Indexing Standards provide a common metadata element set for all electronic documents as well as establish a common subject thesaurus. Search engines including the state's search application to allow the user the ability to search by keyword, phrase or subject as well as browsing by subject use indexing. (For additional information, reference the *Web Site Accessibility Policy*).

2.5   Web Site Content, Organization, and Architecture

State agencies publish and otherwise make available great quantities of information. The primary reason someone visits a State Web site is information and access to resources. Users want to get a permit or renew a license, locate state resources, or check on the status of a request.

Content is the reason for your Web site's existence. The information available on your Web site should reflect the needs of the targeted audience. Your content should be "fresh", easy to understand, well presented and grammatically correct. If you use topic specific words, acronyms, or phrases, consider that some users may find them difficult to understand so anticipate and explain. Content, including its presentation and grammar, reflect the professionalism of an agency.

A Web site's organization, architecture and navigation should consider the user's needs, interests, and abilities. Organizational hierarchy of the agency should not determine navigation. Content should be easy to find.   Navigation should be intuitive and navigational elements should be consistent throughout the Web site.

2.6   The Planning Process

The planning process for an agency's Web site consists of four broad steps:

1. Clearly define your target audience. Understand the diversity, demands and abilities of professional groups, internal customers, business partners, and individual citizens who may use the Web site.
2. Identify the content and resources that will populate the Web site. Examine the information from the user's perspective and setup a process to divide it into clear, logical categories.
3. Create a business plan for your Web site. How does the site meet the business objectives of the agency? What are the objectives the Web site will help the agency achieve? Indicate how the content's organization will help meet the agency's objectives.

4. After defining content and purpose of the site, create the navigation structure for your Web site. Using the logical groupings, move users from broad categories on the home page to categories that are more detailed and content on second level and all subsequent pages**.**

In addition, all agency Web pages shall contain a link to the State's portal site. (See Appendix A for more information.)

DoIT, WSD can assist your agency in the Web site planning process.

2.7   State Branding

The Internet is one of the fundamental ways that New Hampshire Government presents itself to the public. In many instances, agency Web pages form a visitor's first impression of New Hampshire and New Hampshire Government. In order to present a consistent, professional image, it is important that all agency Web pages clearly establish their relationship under New Hampshire Government with the use of branding. Not only does branding impart a visual identity, but consistently assures the visitor that they are viewing credible, original information.

All agency Web pages shall contain common elements to clearly identify them as part of the State of New Hampshire overall Web presence. (Reference the *New Hampshire e-Government Branding Policy.*)

2.7.1   Design Elements

Agencies shall select banner, footer and style sheets from those available on the DoIT Web Development Web site. Selections will include template layouts, graphics and style sheets.

When selecting text and background colors for use on agency sites, choose colors that are "Web-safe". Older browsers may simulate, or "dither", the display of "unsafe" colors that may display unintended results.

2.7.2   Style Elements

Sites shall control fonts, colors and associated components, with style sheets. Style sheets for text elements are available in various color palettes.

All Web pages will be left aligned. Creating navigational elements, fixed placement when using JavaScript or other programming languages provides ease of use for navigation. All pages in an Agency's Web site must be a consistent width. Web sites may use either a fixed width or scalable to 100% of the available width of the browser.

Style sheets or embedded styles determine font style and size. Style sheets that use font size, face, and color are included in the templates. Use of the <FONT> tag is deprecated, and browsers in the future may not recognize the <FONT> tag therefore, it will not be used by Agencies.

General Use	Font	Size
Body text	Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, Sans Serif	10 point
Body links	Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, Sans Serif	10 point
Footer information	Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, Sans Serif	6.5 point

2.8   Banner Presence

All agency Web pages shall contain a pre-defined banner that identifies that agency as an official part of the New Hampshire State Government Web site network. Agencies will be identified by name in a pre-defined location within the banner in the appropriate color palette.

An agency's home page requires use of a pre-defined banner that identifies the State as well as the agency. Banners are available in several-styles and formats. The NH.Gov banner reserves space for an agency to insert a logo or other graphic element. Agencies utilizing scalable width sites must use a banner that conforms to this style.

2.8.1   Banner Presence / Subsequent Pages

Additionally, all agency Web pages require an NH.Gov banner presence. Agencies may continue to use their home page banner on all subsequent pages. They may also choose to use a smaller pre-defined banner to identify their agency. In all cases, the agency must have all identifying information in the upper right corner of the page.

Identifying information may be presented in either text or graphics. If text is used, the style sheet includes a class for "heading" and "subheading". Agencies utilizing scalable width sites must use a pre-defined banner that conforms to this style.

2.9   Navigation Elements

All agency Web pages shall provide users with left navigation links. The first navigation link shall direct users to the agency's home page. An agency may also incorporate a common toolbar for navigation at the top of the Web site. The common toolbar, if used, must be used consistently on every page of the site. The common toolbar is reserved for navigation links specific to audience (e.g. citizen, business, visitor), or for specific "quick link" (e.g. search, programs, site map).

In some instances, Web applications may require the full horizontal width of the screen. In those cases, pages may utilize only the common toolbar for navigation purposes. This will only be used when required by the specific application and should not be used throughout the agency's Web site.

Links may be displayed as either text or graphics. Navigation links may utilize JavaScript or other programming language for quick navigation. If JavaScript or other programming language is used, accommodations for incompatible browsers (e.g. <noscript>) must be provided.

2.10   Footer Elements

All sites shall contain the state seal as well as links to "NH.Gov", "Privacy Statement" and "Accessibility Policy".

- State   Seal   (23x23   pixels   –   with   a   recommended   vspace=2)

- NH.Gov link to provide direct access to State portal
- Privacy   Statement   shall   link   users   to   the   State's   privacy   statement   at http://www.nh.gov/disclaimer.html.   Agencies with more stringent privacy statements may provide that information as well as an internal link on the page to the State's policy
- Accessibility Policy shall link users to the State's Accessibility Policy at http://www.nh.gov/wai. Agencies with more stringent accessibility statements may provide that information as well as an internal link on the page to the State's policy.

2.11 Environment

All agency sites will conform to the following environment:

Monitor resolution: 800x600

Browser Requirements:

- Netscape 7.x or higher
- Internet Explorer 5.x or higher
- Opera 7.x or higher
- AOL v7 or higher

All agency sites will incorporate the quality checks as outlined in Appendix B.

2.12 Specific Project Web Sites

Agencies may develop Web sites for a specific project or audience. These sites are not part of the organization structure of the Agency but rather are a link from it. (E.g. The VisitNH.Gov Web site of the Department of Resources and Economic Development.) In such cases, the state branding requirements may be modified to meet specific program needs. Modification can include, but is not limited to, custom images, banners and icons and navigation placement. All state Web sites so identified shall contain the following elements:

2.12.1 Home Page

The site will be clearly identified as an official Web site of New Hampshire State Government. Pages shall include the Official State Seal predominately located "above the fold".

2.12.2 Footer Elements

All sites shall contain links in the footer to "NH.Gov", "Privacy Statement" and "Accessibility Policy".

The Web Development Group of DoIT can assist you in the Web site planning process.

Visit the DoIT Web Site Standards and Guidelines Web page for details and example templates.

3   ACCOUNTABILITY

This standard pertains to all executive branch department, agency, commission, program, and enterprise Web pages and to the administrators of those pages.

It is the responsibility of each Agency/Department/Division/Bureau Chief or their designee to enforce these minimum standards.

Employees who do not comply with this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the Administrative Rules of the Division of Personnel.

4   DESCRIPTION

Not applicable

5   APPENDIX A – WEB SITE PLANNING WORKSHEET
An agency creates a Web site to:

- Increase public awareness about available programs, services and resources
- Disseminate documents, statistics and databases
- Enhance the agency's public image
- Provide a means of communication for receiving and submitting information
- Inform other agencies and employees about agency activities

The site should reflect authority, accuracy, and currency/timeliness in providing information on the Internet.

Authority
Every document will have information on how to contact the agency and/or responsible party regarding its content. Contact information should include an email link, address and telephone number.

Accuracy
Agencies shall ensure the accuracy of information posted to their sites. State information is often the basis of important decisions made by the public and the information available on the site should reflect this.

Timeliness/Currency
All documents posted to the site will include dates created and modified. Posting information as soon as possible is critical especially if it is time-sensitive. Promptly removing or updating out-of-date is essential. Web sites will clearly note all archived information.

This worksheet was developed to assist an agency in the initial requirements gather for their agency's Web site. The planning process contains four broad steps:

1. Clearly, define your target audience. Understand the diversity, demands and abilities of professional groups, internal customers, business partners, and individual citizens who may use the Web site.
2. Identify the content and resources that will populate the Web site. Examine the information from the user's perspective and setup a process to divide it into clear, logical categories.
3. Create a business plan for your Web site. How does the site meet the business objectives of the agency? What are the objectives the Web site will help the agency achieve? Indicate how the content's organization will help meet the agency's objectives.
4. After defining content and purpose of the site, create the navigation structure for your Web site. Using the logical groupings, move users from broad categories on the home page to categories that are more detailed and content on second level and all subsequent pages**.**

Web Site Planning

State of New Hampshire
Office of Information Technology
Quality Technology Solutions

WEB SITE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

What is the purpose of this site? (e.g., share information, public awareness, and communications tool)

What results are expected from this site? (e.g., decrease mailings/telephone calls, and enhanced public image)

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

Identify all current users of agency information and/or resources. (e.g., existing stakeholders, employees, other agencies, and the general public)

Who else may want access to agency information and/or resources once it is available? (e.g., potential stakeholders, the general public -- THINK GLOBALLY)

Do the users have any specific technology characteristics? (e.g. , special needs hardware/software limitations etc.)

WEB SITE CONTENT

Identify all current users of agency information and/or resources. (e.g., existing stakeholders, employees, other agencies, and the general public)

What information and/or resources should be available through the agency's site? Identify as immediate, short term and long term goals. (e.g., frequently asked question, publications, databases -- BRAIN STORM)

WEB SITE ORGANIZATION & ARCHITECTURE

How does users' access information from your agency? Are there logical topics/categories? (Be aware that most users do not understand the organizational hierarchy of the agency)

6   APPENDIX B – QUALITY ASSURANCE CHECKLISTS

Site name:

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URL:

Home Page

_____TITLE tag included, content descriptive

_____Includes correct header

_____Page includes "date last modified" and date is correct

_____Back button is functional

All pages

_____Spell check performed

_____Correct HTML syntax verified

_____All links tested

_____All pages have unique TITLE tags, content is descriptive

_____If forms are included: all operate correctly

_____If scripted elements are included (rollovers, pull down menus): all operate correctly

_____Appropriate ALT tags verified. (E.g., site tested with text-only browser or with images turned off)

_____If site has frames; external links open in full browser window

PDF and native format documents

_____Files referenced correctly within content (e.g., Name of document (PDF)

_____Files download correctly (either by showing in browser or launching appropriate software)

_____PDF's follow standards for required elements (title, thumbnails, etc.)

Notes: _____
_____

Date: _____

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Designer/Programmer Quality Control Checklist

Site name:

HTML syntax, page layout, and standard page elements

_____HTML syntax follows the HTML 4.01 transitional standards

_____Syntax is correct on meta descriptions and/or meta keywords

_____Page background color is designated

_____All special characters are properly coded (e.g., em dashes (—), math characters)

_____Graphics with text are spelled correctly

_____All pages have a meaningful and unique <TITLE> tag

_____Logos, identifying marks, and similar are consistent in color, size, and orientation

_____Page layout is consistent across site (e.g., margins, spaces, size and placement of headings, line lengths)

_____If the site uses frames, the <NOFRAMES> option is provided

_____If the site uses frames, links that lead off site open in the full browser window

_____An e-mail contact is provided on the home page

Headers, footers, and other navigation

_____Every page has a header consistent with its related pages and standards within a site

_____Every page has a footer consistent with its related pages and standards within a site

_____Navigational elements are consistent across the site

_____If a page is static, content and graphics are no wider than 740 pixels

Content

_____A spell-check was conducted on every page

_____If "Date Last Updated" is used, date is correct

_____A writer or editor has reviewed all content for grammar, accuracy, style, and consistency

Page Layout and basic design standards

_____Photo cropping and placement is appropriate for readability and text flow on small monitor

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_____Graphical elements line up correctly on all browsers

_____Graphic layout is consistent within levels of the site

_____Backgrounds do not interfere with the legibility of overlaying text

_____All colors are consistent across the site

Text treatment and fonts

_____All graphical text is clear and easy to read

_____Graphic titles and other text treatments are spaced appropriately (kerning, tracking, and leading)

_____Fonts match across site, on each page, and within graphical elements

_____Title and subtitle relationships are consistent across site for size, color, and face

_____Check spelling in all graphics

Graphical elements – All graphics must be Web-ready

_____Only GIF or JPEG formats have been used

_____Anti-aliasing and/or transparency has been applied where appropriate

_____Color has been degraded as far as possible without sacrificing integrity

_____All graphics are optimized for a maximum of a 16-bit color palette

_____Graphical headers and other full-page graphics are 740 pixels wide or less

_____Designer has followed appropriate style guide for site if applicable

Multimedia files

_____Sound files are created as AIFF (.aif) or WAVE (.wav)

_____Video files are created as QuickTime (.mov) or MPEG (.mpg)

_____Animation files are created as Shockwave (.swf), animated GIFS (.gif), or QuickTime (.mov)

Scripts (CGI, JavaScript, etc.)

_____All JavaScript elements (e.g., rollovers, pop-up windows) work correctly on the standard browser set

_____All JavaScript elements (e.g., rollovers, pop-up windows) have a <NOSCRIPT> alternative

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Usability and integrity

_____Download time tested

_____Context-appropriate, meaningful "alt" tags have been created for all graphic elements

_____Navigational elements tested for linking and content accuracy

_____All links work throughout every page, including text, graphical and mailto links

_____Colors for hypertext links are consistent throughout the site

_____There is a link to the home page on every page of the site

_____There is a link to the portal page (www.nh.gov) on every page of the site

_____Back button functionality is not impaired

Directories and files

_____Separate subdirectories are used for major sub sites or content categories linked from the main site

_____Top-down, relative pathing is used when referencing pages within the site

_____File names should be consistent and do not contain spaces or special characters (e.g., & or $)

_____All extraneous, old, and superseded graphic files removed from the server and archived if appropriate

Date Checked: _____

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7   APPENDIX C – TERMINOLOGY, USAGE, AND SPELLING

Date format:
- Avoid expressing dates as three numerals divided by forward slashes (e.g., 6/11/01); internationally, this format can mean November 6, 2001, not June 11, 2001
- Use the name of the month wherever possible; for example: July 4, 1998, or Jul-4-98.

download: one word, no hyphen

e-mail: spelled with a hyphen

e-Government: spelled with a hyphen, lower case "e "and upper case "G".

homepage: one word

HTML: for "hyper-text markup language"; use capitals when using the term in a phrase or sentence; use lower case letters at the end of a URL.

Internet: always capitalized (it is a proper name)

Intranet: capitalized unless referring to the generic concept of intranets

multimedia: one word, no hyphen

online: one word, no hyphen

PDF: for "portable document file"; use capitals when using the term in a phrase or sentence; use lower case letters when placed at the end of a hyperlink.

Phone number format: divide with hyphens, periods (international convention) or parentheses. That is, any of the following is correct: 888-555-1010, 888.555.1010 or (888)555-1010.

portal: use "portal" to refer only to the state home page: www.nh.gov. The opening page for other state sites should be called the home page of that site.

sitemap: one word

Web-enabled: hyphenated with upper case "W".

Web page: preferred form is two words

Web site: preferred form is two words